

Questions, Doubts, Lack of Accountability Undermine Coutts Fundraising

A Report by Donald Best

Declaration by Donald Best

I, Donald Best, am the sole author of this Investigation Report concerning Fundraising for the accused men commonly known as the 'Coutts Four': Anthony Olienick, Chris Carbert, Chris Lysak, and Jerry Morin.

I verily believe that everything in this report is accurate and true to the best of my professional abilities, and considering the sources and information available to me at the time.

Should the need arise or be required, I am willing to create a sworn affidavit based upon this report and / or testify under oath if subpoenaed.

If any person or group objects to anything in this report or that I have published or broadcast anywhere regarding the subjects and issues at hand, I can be contacted via email at:

coutts.report@proton.me

I will professionally consider all communications and especially any relevant evidence or exhibits sent to me. Should new evidence disprove anything in this report or cause me to change any reported fact or my analysis, I will prominently publish that evidence and a revised report at my website: DonaldBest.CA

This report is the result of requests from almost a hundred people (witnesses) who contacted me starting in July, 2023 and expressed concern with the fundraising activities of what I call 'The Margaret MacKay Group' or for brevity 'The MacKay Group'. Some friends and family members of the four accused also contacted me.

I have never directly spoken with any of the four accused, although I have received messages through others.

The intent of this report is twofold:

1/ To document the Coutts Four joint fundraising controversy that is undermining the ability of the Coutts Accused to raise funds, and,

2/ To restore public confidence in fundraising through a recommended 'Clean Start' for the individual fundraising efforts of each accused. As detailed later, it is my belief that the current situation has destroyed the viability of joint fundraising for the foreseeable future.

About Donald Best

I am Donald Best, a Canadian citizen born in Hamilton, Ontario.

I am a former Toronto Police Sergeant (Detective) with almost 45 years of investigations and intelligence experience both in the public and private sectors. Now I'm mostly an independent journalist and an anti-corruption advocate. I still consult for various law firms about investigations and evidence management in complex high-value fraud cases.

My experience in fraud-specific investigations spans from 1980 to the present day. In the early 1980s I was assigned to the Toronto Police 52 Division Fraud Squad where I handled hundreds of different types of fraud investigations from the smallest to the most complex international, high-value frauds. I have also investigated several dozen incidents involving the misappropriation of funds donated to charities, churches, sports teams, and similar causes.

During my service as a member of the Fraud Squad, the Toronto Police Commission honoured me with the 'Merit Mark' for solving a complex international fraud involving stolen identities. The 'Merit Mark' was at the time the highest investigative award, and second only to the Medal of Honour.

About 1993 I was accredited as a Certified Fraud Examiner ('CFE') by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, an international organization of professional fraud investigators in law enforcement and the private sector. *

One of my most noteworthy fraud cases concluded in 2021 when a Miami Jury awarded a record US\$269 million dollars in a RICO fraud case based upon my investigations, undercover work, and evidence I gathered in seven countries around the world during an investigation that took years.

A media release by the plaintiffs' lawyers stated in part,

"The jury considered and accepted evidence showing an international conspiracy and corrupt activities by persons in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and in Barbados where the conspiracy originated.

The case involved international money laundering... and Endemic & Systemic Corruption in Barbados Courts & Government."

(Eleventh Judicial Circuit Miami-Dade County Florida CASE NO. 13-37522 CA 32 – Kathleen I. Davis et al v Estate of Iain Deane et al)

More information about my background can be found at my website: DonaldBest.CA, and in the 'Donald Best Additional Background' section near the end of this report.

Badges of Fraud

This document makes strong allegations about some of the fundraising conducted in support of the 'Coutts Four', including fundraising for their legal costs, personal support in prison, and for their close family members.

My investigation identified multiple major 'Badges of Fraud' with Coutts fundraising by persons associated with the 'Margaret MacKay Group'.

A general definition of the term 'Badge of Fraud' is:

"Facts or circumstances that suggest that a party or parties are trying to hinder or defraud others."

It is important to note that the mere presence of a 'Badge of Fraud' does not prove fraud, but only acts as an indicator or 'Red Flag' to attract the interest of fraud investigators and auditors.

Badges of Fraud can sometimes be 'defused' or shown to be accidental or innocent through additional investigation and disclosure.

The presence of multiple and major Badges of Fraud can lead to a strong belief that fraud exists, and that a comprehensive professional investigation should be initiated by law enforcement, auditors, or the organization itself depending upon circumstances.

Some Badges of Fraud are specific to certain types of industries or frauds, such as in Land Transfer Frauds that have very specific Badges of Fraud relating to the handling of Land Title documents. Similarly there are specific Badges of Fraud associated with the handling of cash donations during small charity and community events regularly held at town halls and church basements across this country.

Other Badges of Fraud are more universal. Primary indicators of fraud in any investigation start with the 'Big Three'...

- Failure to keep adequate records,
- Concealment of records,
- Refusal to make records available.

... especially over a long term and where large amounts of money are involved.

I am saddened to report that each of the three Primary Badges of Fraud above (plus other major Badges of Fraud) are present in the Coutts Four fundraising associated with the Margaret MacKay Group.

My findings include the observation that only in the last number of weeks has the MacKay Group begun to frenetically 'construct' whatever financial records are possible

after well over a year of not keeping proper contemporaneous financial records and supporting documents such as contemporaneously issued donor receipts.

Further, as of Sunday, November 19, 2023 some of the Coutts accused and their representatives and family members have never seen any written financial records of the MacKay Group's fundraising.

This despite numerous requests and the fact that the MacKay Group publicly claims more than \$300,000 raised for the 'Coutts Four' during a period of well over a year.

Please read the above bold paragraphs again and let it sink in...

The MacKay Group admits to over \$300,000 raised in donations over the past 16 months, but the purported recipients and beneficiaries of the fundraising have never seen any written financial records. Further, the MacKay Group's refusal to show financial records and to provide copies to the declared beneficiaries of the fundraising is a major Badge of Fraud that continues to the release of this report.

Background, Major Findings, Recommendations

Background - Including from Witnesses

1. Minor questions and concerns about joint fundraising for the 'Coutts Four' had accompanied fundraising efforts since the imprisonment of the four men in February 2022. As more people of good intent began to fundraise in the 'Coutts Four' name, there were natural questions about how much money was being raised and how it was distributed.
2. One last-minute fundraising event (not the MacKay Group) in early November 2022 reached a new level having collected about \$20,000 for the four accused. Three of the four families were actively engaged in conducting the fundraiser. Unfortunately some of the funds were not distributed in a timely manner. One of the uninvolved family members then conducted an online campaign against the organizers. This was the first major incident or conflict that I noted. It shows how important it is that fundraising efforts have the systems, transparency, and independent oversight in place to preserve public confidence.
3. During the Fall of 2022, Margaret MacKay became active in fundraising for the Coutts Four. MacKay was one of many well-intended people who joined family and friends of the Coutts accused to both alert Canadians to their plight and fundraise for the men.
4. MacKay had previously been active in fundraising for other accused persons associated with the 'Freedom Convoy'. She had branded herself as 'Granny MacKay' during the protests and started her 'GrannyMacKay.CA' domain on February 1, 2022.

5. Some Coutts Four family members, friends, and others started to coalesce around MacKay's fundraising efforts in Fall of 2022. About November 2022, Margaret MacKay set up a 'GiveSendGo' campaign for the four Coutts accused. This is still active and to date has raised almost \$58,000.
6. The current 'core members' of the MacKay Group are believed to include:
 1. Margaret MacKay
 2. Jaclyne Martin (common-law spouse of Jerry Morin)
 3. Chantelle Grayson (aka Chantel Grayston, Gray)
 4. Danielle Slettede
7. The MacKay Group began providing funds to each of the accused's designated representatives (family members or friends) - sometimes in cash and sometimes via bank transfer. Recipients of cash are not required to sign receipts or acknowledgements.
8. There has never been an independent funds-sharing agreement in place between the Coutts accused or their representatives. There was and is no funds-sharing agreement in place between the MacKay Group and the Coutts accused or their representatives. MacKay Group distribution decisions and meetings do not always involve representatives from each of the accused.
9. Some (perhaps many) important decisions were made by the MacKay 'core group' without the knowledge or consent of each Coutts family representative. This included some decisions to divert funds away from the Coutts Four.
10. The phrase 'Coutts Four' is a powerful fundraising brand. Multiple people and fundraising efforts initially used this brand in some one-off events and smaller efforts.
11. During 2023, the MacKay Group started a campaign to claim exclusive use of the 'Coutts Four' brand and images of the men for fundraising. Members of the group began discourage others from using the name in fundraising - even to the point of threatening lawsuits.
12. As one example, a couple had started fundraising for the Coutts Four by selling items of clothing featuring the images of the four accused. They had been sending the profits to each prisoner's family. A MacKay Group core member ordered them to send all funds to the MacKay Group for distribution and threatened a lawsuit if they did not.
13. The objectionable behaviour of members of the MacKay Group escalated in their efforts to gain sole control of the Coutts Four Brand and fundraising - and also to control and restrict the ability of others to discuss the Coutts story and fundraising publicly.

14. MacKay Group members pressured and then 'ordered' Jason Lavigne to not have certain guests on his show. They also advised certain people to not appear as guests on the show. When Lavigne was invited to appear as a guest on a popular American broadcast, MacKay Group members stated he should surrender his guest position to Margaret MacKay as only she was "authorized" to speak for the Coutts Four.
15. The MacKay group attempted to exert similar pressures in other online venues.
16. Some members of the MacKay Group use manipulative, coercive, and abusive behaviours against some elderly family members to have them approve certain decisions by the core group, and in an attempt to sabotage fundraising that is not channeled through the MacKay Group.
17. This abusive behaviour has been documented for at least a year, but was recently brought into the public eye when on November 17, 2023 prisoner Chris Lysak publicly released a heartbreaking recording demanding that Jaclyne Martin and *"these women... Leave my father and family alone."*
18. Chris Lysak's recording also told of how he had repeatedly asked Margaret MacKay to instruct Jaclyne Martin and "the women" to leave his family members alone. In the message, Chris Lysak appeared to not blame Margaret MacKay.
19. Jaclyne Martin and Chantelle Grayson actively attempted to stop and sabotage Chris Lysak's new GiveSendGo campaign that raised \$160,000 dollars in a few days. "The women" also attempted to sabotage Lysak's bid to retain a new top-drawer lawyer to replace his previous legal aid lawyer - through what amounts to elder abuse of Lysak's father.
20. This recent event was only one example of members of the MacKay 'core' attempting to sabotage Coutts Four fundraising outside of the MacKay Group - and to maintain a situation where two of the accused were forced to rely upon Legal Aid Lawyers, while the other two received superior MacKay Group funding.
21. Further, some core members of the MacKay Group and their supporters engaged in online campaigns of doxing, defamation, and rumour designed to discredit Coutts family members, friends, and journalists from questioning both the MacKay Group narrative and fundraising issues.

Major Findings

1. Members of 'The MacKay Group' have jointly, and individually, for a period of well over a year - engaged in fundraising practices that exhibit multiple major Badges of Fraud.
2. Some specific incidents as recounted to me by donors and witnesses, do rise to the level of criminal fraud - but only IF a court found intent.
3. The actual amounts received by the MacKay Group - or intended by donors to be received by the MacKay Group - will likely never be fully known or accounted for. Cash donations are collected and distributed without receipts, or the keeping of proper contemporaneous records. Margaret MacKay stores large amounts of cash for long periods without distribution to the Coutts Four representatives.
4. The amount of funds raised as disclosed to the public, is different than the amount Margaret MacKay talks about when in private conversation with trusted persons.
5. When Margaret MacKay regularly came onto The Lavigne Show and provided Jason and me with frequent updates, Margaret stated that the 'Coutts Four' campaign had raised almost a million dollars of a 2 million dollar goal. Margaret told us of a single \$100,000 donation and explained that she was not publicly announcing the large amount as she did not want to dampen donor enthusiasm. Margaret told us and others that she had four envelopes of cash in her safe which she would give to each of the accused on the day they were released from prison. She referred to these as 'Dignity Envelopes.'
6. At that time, the MacKay Group Coutts Four campaign was publicly acknowledging receiving a little over \$300,000 in donations.
7. Margaret MacKay is engaged in full-time fundraising for the 'Coutts Four' and has raised over the \$25,000 threshold stipulated by the Alberta Charitable Fund Raising Act and associated Regulations. MacKay is not related to the Coutts accused or their families.
8. Depending upon the interpretation and application of the law, Margaret MacKay and her Group could be in violation of the Alberta Charitable Fund Raising Act and associated Regulations. The MacKay Group is certainly in violation of the intent of the Act concerning the Duty to Maintain Records and to Provide Reports.
9. The lack of transparency, accountability, and concerns about the MacKay Group fundraising activities such as a failure / refusal to provide donor receipts did not go unnoticed by the public. The MacKay Group's activities and methods eventually significantly undermined public confidence in Group Fundraising for the Coutts Four.

10. The 'inner core' of the MacKay Group is comprised of Margaret MacKay, Jaclyne Martin (common-law spouse of prisoner Jerry Morin), Chantelle Grayson, and Danielle Slettede.
11. A few family members and friends of the Coutts accused are concerned that Jaclyne Martin is unduly influencing Margaret MacKay. Martin's manipulative, controlling, and abusive interactions with some others - including family and friends of other Coutts prisoners - raises questions about who does control the MacKay Group and its collected funds.
12. The donated funds collected by the MacKay Group were not distributed equally to each of the Coutts accused and / or to their families and lawyers. Two of the accused were favoured by the MacKay Group, and received more than the other two accused. The disparity in providing funds to the 'expensive' lawyers of two accused, but not to the lawyers for the other two was explained to some as being necessary "*because the expensive lawyers were helping everyone.*"
13. Decisions about the distribution of some of the funds were made by a Core Group that included representatives / family from only two of the four Coutts accused.
14. Some Coutts accused and their families have no knowledge of whether Margaret MacKay is paid an honorarium for her efforts, or what expenses are covered through the donated funds and the sale of promotional items.
15. Some of the funds collected by the MacKay Group were diverted to other uses without the knowledge or consent of all of the Coutts accused or their representatives.
16. Public donors to the MacKay Group fundraising campaigns were misled by published campaign materials and oral statements that their donations would be 100% received by the four Coutts accused, and in equal shares.
17. Some of the funds collected by the MacKay Group were diverted to other uses without the knowledge or consent of donors, and in specific deviation from the advertised use of their donations.
18. Some members of the MacKay Group use manipulative, coercive, and abusive behaviours against some elderly family members to make them approve certain decisions by the core group, and in an attempt to sabotage fundraising that was not channeled through the MacKay Group.
19. Some Coutts family members and friends state they take care to not offend the MacKay Group as they fear a reduction in funding.
20. Some Coutts family members and friends state that they are fearful to speak publicly because core members of the MacKay Group and their supporters engage in online

campaigns of doxing, defamation, and rumour designed to discredit Coutts family members, friends, and journalists who question both the MacKay Group narrative and fundraising issues.

Joint Fundraising No Longer Viable

Public confidence in the Joint Fundraising by the MacKay Group was suffering long before I learned in June 2023 that these four decent men were still in remand prison - held as political prisoners since February 2022.

The conflicts, doubts, and questions about the MacKay Group fundraising cannot be undone. The events and evidence gathered during the last few months about the joint fundraising cannot be undone. The Badges of Fraud are too major and numerous to ignore or discount.

Chris Lysak's public plea of a few days ago that the common-law spouse of one of his co-accused should leave his father and family alone - over fundraising - should be accepted for the plain truth that it is...

Joint fundraising for the Coutts accused is no longer viable for the public, the four accused, or for the families.

A Plea for Compassion and Understanding for Coutts Accused, Family and Friends

Regardless of the controversy surrounding the joint fundraising, we must remember that Anthony Olienick, Chris Carbert, Chris Lysak, and Jerry Morin are political prisoners held without trial or bail for 640+ days.

They and their loved ones are under incredible pressures that most of us cannot begin to comprehend. Alone in a cell: deprived of all control, knowledge, and influence. Unable to contact loved ones except through dehumanizing rules and technology. Unable to support and guide your children.

All the time knowing that you are innocent and a political prisoner for opposing the tyrannical government that destroyed so many businesses, jobs, homes, and families.

The Coutts men are denied bail while an accused cop killer in Toronto wears an ankle bracelet and watches re-runs in his comfortable living room.

Many readers are aware that I was falsely convicted upon the fabricated evidence and perjury of 3 corrupt lawyers and a corrupt OPP Detective Sergeant - and spent 63 days in prison solitary confinement torture.

Although I was later vindicated, my time in prison changed me and my perspectives on everything. Some of my extended family and long-time friends abandoned me because they just couldn't believe that our courts were that corrupt. Over the years some have crawled back, but our relationship will never be the same.

I only did 63 days. The good Canadians we call the Coutts Four have been in prison for ten times what I experienced. Their loved ones are overwhelmed with helplessness that Canada could be doing this to their fathers, sons, friends...

So when we see evidence that some family members and friends have acted badly towards others, I will cut them some slack that I would not ordinarily do.

But make no mistake: This nonsense must stop. Right Now.

The emotional explosions and strategic attacks of what Chris Lysak calls 'the women' must cease for the good of all. Right Now.

Recommendations

- 1/ Cease and Windup Current MacKay Group Joint Campaign**
- 2/ 'Clean Start' Fundraising For Each Individual Accused**
- 3/ Possible Police Investigation**

1/ Cease and Windup Current MacKay Group Joint Campaign

The evidence is clear that Canadians and members of the Coutts families have lost faith in the MacKay Group.

Last week an independent GiveSendGo campaign for Chris Lysak raised \$160,000 in a few days. That's half of what the MacKay Group purportedly raised in almost a year and a half.

Now Chris Lysak can hire a top drawer lawyer.

Many have questioned why Lysak had to rot in prison for 640+ days before he was able to hire a decent lawyer. That's a fair question and observation.

Canadians are ready to support the Coutts accused - but only when they have confidence that their donations will be used for the intended purpose within a transparent process governed by proper procedures, rules, and oversight.

The MacKay Group fundraising campaigns should cease immediately. Held donations should be equally distributed to the benefit of the four Coutts accused according to their wishes.

A forensic audit should be performed on the MacKay Group and upon the finances of each individual member of the core team.

Canadians and the Coutts Four deserve to know how much money was raised and where it ended up.

2/ 'Clean Start' Fundraising For Each Individual Accused

Two of the Coutts accused recently announced new 'Clean Start' individual fundraising - separate from the MacKay Group campaign and history.

A 'Clean Start' involves two elements... a 'Clean Start Date' and an Audit of Past Donations.

A 'Clean Start Date' is a date where all donations now adhere to structures that instill public confidence. These structures usually include...

a/ New bank accounts, new donation destinations (new emails, GoFundMe or similar websites.)

b/ Issuance of numbered and dated receipts that clearly indicate the donor, the receiving charity, and the purpose of the donation.

c/ Records-keeping systems that are professionally maintained and auditable going forward.

d/ Public declaration of persons who are authorized to fund-raise for the cause.

e/ Independent oversight by a group of trusted and uninterested individuals - a committee of public persons who have no skin in the game.

f/ A public announcement and explanation of the new structures that provide verifiable records of donations and distributions.

Charity Central

Alberta has an excellent website to advise persons and organizations wanting to fundraise for worthy causes.

There are laws. There are standards.

A pity that the MacKay Group and others didn't start well with the systems in place and adherence to the laws that are detailed at Charity Central. If they had we wouldn't be in the mess that we are.

<https://www.charitycentral.ca/>

Audit of Past Donations

The 'Audit of Past Donations' is exactly what it says... an independent professional forensic audit that creates a public report.

Whether or not the original fundraisers choose to cooperate, an Audit of Past Donations is necessary to answer public doubts, and to show that any discrepancies, accidents, or misdirections of donations is noted.

3/ Possible Police Investigation

Any professional fraud investigator will immediately identify multiple serious Badges of Fraud in relation to the previous fundraising by the MacKay Group personnel.

The fact that as this report is published late Sunday, November 19, 2023 - the MacKay Group cannot or will not produce financial records to the Coutts Four and their representatives is all any police officer needs to open a file.

The question is whether or not police can be trusted to become involved in a case that has already been tainted by politicalization of the original police investigation, the decisions to charge and to withhold bail.

If police become involved in a Coutts Four fraud investigation, can Canadians now count on them to proceed without political goals and pressures?

The RCMP cannot be involved as that organization is conflicted, having laid the original charges.

Similarly the Crown Prosecution office is also conflicted, so at the very least a Crown prosecutor from another province should be assigned to advise law enforcement concerning any Coutts Fundraising Fraud Investigation.

If police open an official investigation, they should assign an experienced fraud investigator and auditor to take all necessary steps including the obtaining of personal banking and other financial records through search warrants.

I can tell you that if I still possessed my badge and authority, the search warrants would already be stacked in a nice little pile on my desk for execution in the morning at a number of financial institutions and residential addresses. The judge would already have signed them with hardly a question - such is the evidence that is readily available to justify the warrants.

Perhaps, however, the answer is to simply initiate a Clean Start fundraising campaign for each of the Coutts accused.

One hundred people contacted me and asked for my investigation. Those same Canadians can contact the police if they desire. I understand that some have already done so.

Further Background - The Coutts Accused, Margaret MacKay

About Tuesday, June 20, 2023, Jason Lavigne told me that the 'Coutts Four' as he called them were coming up to 500 days held without bail since being arrested on February 13th and 14th, 2022 - just hours before the Trudeau Government declared The Emergencies Act.

Until Jason spoke to me in June 2023, I hadn't heard anything about Anthony Olienick, Chris Carbert, Chris Lysak, or Jerry Morin since the news of their arrests. I didn't know their names but vaguely recalled seeing a cache of weapons in the media, hearing that they conspired to murder RCMP officers, and that they were part of a nationwide terrorist network.

Having once been a young police officer who carried the dead body of a 22-year-old friend shot through the heart - to say that I lacked sympathy for the 'Coutts Four' would be an understatement.

When Jason told me they had been denied bail all that time, I thought *"That confirms they're terrorists. Let 'em rot..."* I even said it aloud: *"Let 'em rot in prison."*

Canada is a country that grants bail to everyone. Cop killers, gang bangers on their second attempt-murder charge, pedophiles, serial arsonists, rapists – everybody makes bail in Canada.

So, if these Coutts Four were held without bail, there must be good reason. Or so I thought.

Then I started focusing my decades of investigative knowledge and experience on the available evidence.

To a professional investigator, evidence and law - not emotion - are all that matter.

By the time I appeared on Jason Lavigne's June 26, 2023 Morning Show and met Margaret 'Granny' MacKay for the first time, I knew that there was something very wrong with the 'Coutts Four' case.

Margaret MacKay again appeared on the June 30, 2023 Morning Show as Jason and I began *"an ongoing series where we will continue to track and delve into the case of the Coutts Four, following the trial, the testimonies, and the proceedings until their conclusion. We aim to ensure these men receive the same justice as anyone else, upholding the principle of 'innocent until proven guilty.'*

On July 8, 2023, I published my analysis and professional opinion in an article: *Denying Bail to the Coutts Four is a Political Decision and Act*.

My article was, to my knowledge, the first professional analysis of the photograph of firearms and other exhibits that the government used to declare and justify the Emergencies Act.

My article stated:

“My examination of the information we have access to thus far convinces me that politics played a major role:

- in the conduct of the police investigation,
- in the less than professional handling of evidence,
- in the staging and release of the photo on February 14, 2022, and,
- in the denial of bail to the Coutts Four.

Given all of the above circumstances, I now believe that the decision to lay criminal charges against all or some of the Coutts Four was also politically motivated.

Don't get me wrong here... I'm not saying that each of the Coutts Four is innocent of every charge. We won't know that until we hear the evidence at trial.

What I am saying is that in context, the denial of bail is a political decision and act – intended to achieve three purposes...

1/ To act as public ‘evidence’ that the accused persons were so dangerous that it justified the use of the Emergencies Act,

2/ To influence potential jury members to be more likely to convict the accused,

3/ To deter other protesters and protests by teaching all Canadians a good lesson about what happens to people and families who oppose the Liberal Government.”

So - a battle-scarred old cop came full circle from “*Let ‘em rot*” - to publicly proclaiming that the Coutts accused are Political Prisoners in Canada.

Margaret ‘Granny’ MacKay played a significant role in my decision to investigate and report on the charges against the accused known as the ‘Coutts Four’.

The truth is, that except for the tireless efforts of Margaret ‘Granny’ MacKay to bring the story of the four Coutts accused to Canadians and to the world, I probably would not have even been aware of the plight of these decent men.

Neither would many have others heard that Canada keeps political prisoners – except for the dedication and hard work of ‘Granny’ MacKay. Her role as a catalyst in bringing public attention to the Coutts Accused can never be denied or discounted.

Margaret MacKay and the ‘Granny MacKay’ Brand

Margaret ‘Granny’ MacKay is not related to any of the four men being held without bail: Anthony Olienick, Chris Carbert, Chris Lysak, and Jerry Morin. She is not a grandmother to anyone in their respective families.

The ‘Granny’ nickname was self-created by Margaret MacKay, and was apparently first used by her during the ‘Freedom Convoy’ protest in Ottawa in January / February, 2022.

It may well be that MacKay used this nickname in personal relationships prior to the Freedom Convoy, but it was during the convoy that she started to make ‘Granny MacKay’ her persona and brand.

On February 1, 2022 in the middle of the Ottawa Freedom Convoy, Margaret MacKay established her online domain name ‘grannymackay.ca’

The ‘Granny MacKay’ brand evokes memories of our grandmothers, warm cookies out of the oven, a person who loved us unconditionally even when we were in trouble. We inherently trust our Grannies.

There is nothing inherently wrong with having or developing a nickname, persona, or brand.

Indeed, the writer of this report has a brand of ‘Donald Best’ which is promoted by my website DonaldBest.CA and my social media such as X, ‘@DonaldBestCA’. My ‘persona’ and ‘brand’ are built upon my experience as a former Toronto Police Sergeant Detective, as an award-winning professional investigator of many decades, and as an independent journalist who covers important stories that legacy media ignores or mis-reports.

Margaret MacKay Group Leaves The Lavigne Show

On August 4, 2023, after about six weeks of shows with Margaret MacKay, Coutts family members, and friends, Margaret sent an email notifying Jason and me that she was ‘stepping away’ from the Lavigne Show and going “Back to fundraising”.

At the same time, some of the people associated with what I now call the “Margaret MacKay Group” had also ‘stepped away’ and began personal attacks upon Jason, me, and a few others.

Most of the Lavigne Show viewers and followers of my independent journalism remained unaware that the attacks were part of the intense efforts by the MacKay Group to:

1. Possess and exert sole control of the lucrative ‘Coutts Four’ brand for the purposes of fundraising.

2. Control the content of The Lavigne Show regarding the ‘Coutts Four’ by dictating which guests were and were not allowed to appear on the show, and which external venues Jason Lavigne would be allowed to appear on if talking about the Coutts Four. The MacKay Group also contacted others and instructed them not to appear on the Lavigne Show or to speak with Jason or me privately.
3. Stop legitimate questions and concerns about the MacKay Group’s operations, finances, and apparent inequitable distribution of donations. There were also allegations of a complete lack of transparency and accountability – even to the very men and their families who were supposed to be the beneficiaries of the MacKay Group’s efforts.

Additional Donald Best Background

My website at DonaldBest.CA contains an ‘About’ page that informs more about my background – including that I was the sole recipient of the 2018 OCLA Ontario Civil Liberties Award.

My website also details how I was (falsely) convicted of Contempt of Court in an Ontario Civil Case related to the Miami Case detailed earlier in this report.

Although I was eventually vindicated, I was incarcerated for 63 days in an Ontario prison – every day in solitary confinement as the prison authorities advised that solitary was the only way to keep an ex-police officer alive.

In 2017 former Commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police Julian Fantino testified on my behalf and swore an affidavit that one of his officers, a Detective Sergeant, had taken bribes to create false evidence against me. Commissioner Fantino also testified that three corrupt Ontario lawyers had also created false evidence against me, and worked in conjunction with a corrupt Canadian judge to knowingly convict and imprison me upon fabricated and false evidence.

The Barbados Estate at the heart of the Miami-Dade RICO fraud case was valued at over US\$1 Billion dollars. Apparently, those stakes were high enough to cause an OPP Detective Sergeant, three Ontario lawyers, and a judge to forsake their oaths and engage in such corruption.

* Certified Fraud Examiner

I am no longer a CFE - Certified Fraud Examiner, having not maintained my annual dues and conference attendance since I retired.

Donald Best
November 19, 2023